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ABSTRACT

The decision of parents whose native language is English to raise their child bilingually prompted a review of the literature concerning approaches to fostering infant bilingualism. The review focuses on (1) language strategies most often adopted by the bilingual family, such as dichotomy and alteration; (2) other family variables; (3) the Grammont formula; (4) setting and function; (5) factors related to person; (6) violations of the person/language rule; (7) issues of inclusion and exclusion related to language selection; (8) dominance and balance; and (9) alternative educational programs. The concluding section of the review offers 17 guidelines parents might adopt in their endeavor to foster bilingualism in their young children. (RH)

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Fostering Bilingualism in Early Childhood in An English-Speaking Home

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Running head: FOSTERING BILINGUALISM IN AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING HOME

Abstract

It is difficult, but not impossible, to introduce a child to a second language in a home where both parents are native speakers of English. A review of the literature is presented and guidelines arrived at for fostering bilingualism under such circumstances.

Fostering Bilingualism in Early Childhood in An English-Speaking Home

Surprising results have been reported during the past decade with respect to fostering bilingualism under less than favorable conditions. Even in circumstances where English is the native language of both parents as well as the dominant language of the community, bilingualism can be achieved.

Saunders (1980) reported on the acquisition of English-German bilingualism by two Australian children whose linguistic input was approximately 3:1 in favor of English. Although both children were more fluent and more precise in English, their vocabularies in German and English were approximately equal and they communicated proficiently and effectively with German speakers. At the same time they functioned indistinguishably from their monolingual English-speaking peers.

Past (1977) reported on a child's acquisition of English-Spanish bilingualism in response to only 1 to 1 1/2 hours of exclusively Spanish interaction daily with parents who were native speakers of English.

These two reports are of particular interest since previous studies with the exception of Dimitrijević (1965) have not considered situations in which both parents are native speakers of the same language and that language is also the dominant language of the community. Since I am a currently pregnant monolingual English speaker with limited knowledge of Spanish and my husband

is an English-Spanish bilingual whose native language is English, such reports are for us both immediately relevant and encouraging. Although recognizing that potential problems surely exist in a situation such as ours, a shared belief in the value of bilingualism, a shared desire to travel and perhaps to live in a Spanish-speaking country in the future, and strong connections with Hispanic friends and co-workers have led us to a decision to raise our child bilingually. I have therefore reviewed the literature to inform myself and my husband about approaches to the exciting but complex task of creating and fostering infant bilingualism. Although not often specific to our particular backgrounds and circumstances, the body of literature I reviewed proved useful for generating personalized guidelines for our family.

Strategies

Schmidt-Mackey (1977) outlined the language strategies most often adopted by the bilingual family. Two basic strategies are dichotomy and alternation. In dichotomy, language use is fixed on the basis of such factors as person, place, time, topic, and activity. In alternation, spontaneous switching from one language to the other occurs. Multiple strategies may also be used by the bilingual family.

Grosjean (1982) discussed several strategies including dichotomy by age. In this strategy one language is used initially with the child and the second language is introduced at a specific

point later, generally between the ages of three and five. This approach is apparently successful only if measures to control exposure can be taken and only if the non-dominant ethnic community is large and well organized. Zierer (1977) reported on a German-Peruvian child whose parents used this approach. The child was exposed first to German and not until almost three years of age to Spanish. Although successful, the parents had to limit playmates at various ages solely on the basis of language and even went so far as to prohibit the child's Peruvian grandmother from speaking Spanish to the child during his early years.

Although there are potential problems with all strategies and none guarantees success, it has been observed that the more unnatural the strategy the greater the tendency for breakdown. Thus, strategies based upon more arbitrary factors such as time of the day or the day of the week are less likely to be successful.

Factors Related to Family

Other family variables in addition to strategy play an important role. Kuo (1974) found that bilingual proficiency was influenced by the language interaction patterns of the family and the parental attitudes toward the two languages. His study of Chinese preschoolers in Minnesota revealed that children were more proficient in Chinese when the family language orientation was Chinese, when the parents spoke more Chinese with the child as well as between themselves, and when more reading to the child in Chinese occurred. Children were more proficient in English when

the parents had been in the United States longer, were naturalized citizens, and served more American food in the family.

Saunders (1980) also emphasized the role played by behavioral and attitudinal variables. It is not unusual in immigrant families to see parents continuing to use their native language, but children responding in the language of the new country. Such children apparently reject the language of the country of origin in an attempt to assimilate partly due to the fact that their parents remain different in the eyes of the community. Children who recognize that their parents are able, as they are, to function in a manner indistinguishable from monolingual speakers of the dominant language enjoy a distinct advantage. Such children are not made to feel that speaking the non-dominant language is something to be ashamed of or avoided. Saunders (1980) reported on a German-English bilingual child who attended a primary school where several other children were bilingual in various languages and English. In this environment where child-parent exchanges in second languages were often encountered in the schoolyard, the child took pride in his bilingualism as something natural but special.

Christian (1977) discussed bilingualism outcomes in terms of prestige. He pointed out that the school may sabotage bilingualism via the association of more prestigious persons, more prestigious subjects, and more prestigious language activities with the dominant language. With respect to the family he

emphasized that the prestige of a language is related to the prestige of those who use it (with father most often perceived as the person of greatest prestige) and the extent to which the family responds to the mass media in that language, in particular television.

Given societal and, to a varying degree, familial attitudes, the child may be actively or subtly encouraged to devalue or conceal his or her ability in the non-dominant language. Saunders (1980) emphasized that parents often give up on their attempt to foster bilingualism when their child begins to avoid using the non-dominant language or begins to speak it with frequent lexical transfers from the dominant language. As he pointed out, this may be due to a growing awareness on the part of the child of the negative attitudes of others toward the language being spoken in their presence or to negative connotations the language has assumed. His recommendations included adopting a relaxed attitude toward the use of the dominant language while providing linguistic assistance such as offering equivalents in the second language and anticipating topical areas where an appropriate vocabulary might be lacking. In moderation, such assistance is usually welcomed by the child and serves to reduce frustration that might result in avoidance. Patience during periods of language mixing is generally rewarded since these periods are short-lived. In their fear that the child is acquiring neither language appropriately or in their unrealistic expectation that the child be equilingual,

that is equally proficient in the two languages, parents may prematurely abandon their efforts at such times.

Saunders (1980) emphasized not only the need to continue to address the child in the non-dominant language, but the need to elicit responses from the child in the non-dominant language since a child's productions are very much dependent upon his or her perception of the other's ability to understand. A child is thus willing to use the non-dominant language if s/he feels it is necessary in order to fully communicate. As Grosjean (1982) stated,

> Bilingualism in childhood usually occurs because of the need to communicate with those who play an important role in the child's life--parents, siblings, other family members, peers and teachers. As long as these factors are important to the child, he or she will remain bilingual; when they lose their importance or are removed altogether, the child will just as naturally revert to monolingualism. (p. 179)

It is thus considered essential in the development of bilingualism that the child recognize that communication with a significant person requires the acquisition of that person's language.

The Grammont Formula

It is also believed that to avoid confusion and to assist the child in the simultaneous acquisition of two languages that a one person-one language approach is most facilitating. This approach, the Grammont formula, was first recommended by Maurice Grammont, a

French linguist, in 1902 and has enjoyed widespread application since.

Ronjat (1913) provided the first detailed study of bilingualism based upon the Grammont formula of separation of languages by person from infancy. Before the age of two the child developed a systematic method of distinguishing new words by pronunciation and assigning them to le casier Mama or le casier Papa (father's box or mother's box). Before the age of three he described French as speaking comme Papa and German as speaking comme Maman. Ronjat attributed the child's lack of confusion and his success in speaking both languages as a native-speaking child would to the principle une personne, une langue. He noted that parents who had not consistently observed this principle reported that their children experienced great difficulty learning two languages. Alternation between languages by the parents appeared to create interference and to delay the child's separation of the two languages.

Pavlovitch (1920) also reported on parallel language development (Serbian and French) with separation of language by person. By the end of the second year the child consistently differentiated the two languages and appropriately addressed others according to their native language.

Smith (1935) concluded that lack of consistency in association of language with person was responsible for confusion in eight English-Chinese bilingual children studied. She

recommended a clear demarcation between languages by source to promote bilingualism.

Leopold's (1939-1949) classic four-volume study reported on a structured application of the Grammont formula. He, too, found little evidence of interference in the first two years between languages (German and English).

Later studies of the one person-one language approach include Dimitrijevic (1965), von Raffler-Engel (1965, 1970), Imedadze (1966, 1967), and Oksaar (1971, 1976, 1976). Later studies in which the one person-one language approach was not utilized include Burling (1959, 1973), Tabouret-Keller (1962), and Murrell (1966). These studies are fully reviewed in McLaughlin (1978) and in Redlinger (1979). McLaughlin (1978) concluded,

> Interference between languages can be held to a minimum if the domains of use are clearly defined and if the two languages are maintained somewhat in balance . . . studies suggest that the optimal conditions for reducing interference require that both languages be spoken in the home consistently by different persons . . . the greatest amount of interference between languages seems to be produced when adults in the child's environment mix the languages in their own speech. (p. 94)

Christian (1977) included among conditions considered to be essential to the development and maintenance of minority language usage the "continuing exclusive or almost exclusive use of the

minority language by a person of the child's household in speaking with the child" (Christian, 1977, p. 96).

Observations of the child's reliance on the person-language principle have additionally supported usage of the Grammont formula. Grosjean (1982) pointed out that the child rigidly associates languages with persons in an effort to differentiate the languages both lexically and syntactically. This reduces the effort the child has to make with regard to choice of words and adherence to rules. Saunders (1980) noted that the language spoken to a child in an initial encounter will classify the speaker from that moment on, regardless of whether the speaker addressed the parents in the same or a different language. Fantini (1978) discussed sorting of languages on the basis of several factors but empnasized that primary sorting is accomplished in relation to specific persons. He stressed the importance of this simple dichotomy until the child's experiences can lead to other bases for distinction and sorting.

Setting and Function

Setting clearly comes to serve an important role secondary to person as a basis for division of language use. Fantini (1978) reported that for the children in his study the rules were as follows: in a Spanish-speaking locale use Spanish, and in an English-speaking locale use English at least when outside the home unless at a gathering of Spanish speakers. Expectations related to setting included that the language spoken on television, radio,

and the telephone be that of the locale. Grosjean (1982) reported that within locale language choice may vary on the basis of a particular setting, for instance home, school, or community park.

Function also serves as a basis for sorting languages. Grosjean (1982) reported that Spanish-English bilingual children have been noted to use Spanish when caring for or comforting younger children and English when playing school. Fantini (1978) observed that children wishing to tease, shock, surprise, or amuse others use the language opposite that customarily used. Fantini (1978) and Saunders (1980) both reported on the tendency of children to choose one language consistently for private speech, that is, for thinking aloud or talking to oneself during play activities. Saunders noted, however, that language choice, even for private monologues, is influenced by the presence of others and the association of thought content or activity to person. There is clear evidence that the person-language link remains strong even after setting-based and function-based sorting develop. The interlocutor continues to serve as the principal determinant of language choice.

Factors Related to Person

Fantini (1978) identified several later refinements related to interlocutor which influenced language selection in bilingual children. These were whether the person was known to the child or not, whether the person looked Spanish-speaking or not, whether the person was an intimate or not, the role of the person in

relation to the child, the audience present, the languages known and used by the person, the presence or absence of language switching in the person's communication, and the person's language fluency and comprehension.

Several authors have commented on the child's capacity to make judgments regarding the linguistic ability of speakers. Ginishi (1981) found that the only characteristic of person that affected language selection in her sample of six-year-old children was linguistic ability of the speaker, with children choosing the dominant language of the person. Attempts to press children to speak the weaker language of bilingual adults generally fail. Both Fantini (1978) and Saunders (1980) commented on the unwillingness of young children to indulge adults who wish to practice a second language. Fantini (1978) reported that by four years of age children make competent judgments of others' fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Unless individuals speak the non-dominant language convincingly, children tend to respond in the language perceived to be the individual's stronger one.

Violations of the Person-Language Rule

Fantini (1978) described the young child's intolerance of language mixing, a phenomenon reported on by other authors in the past. Switching is apparently considered indicative of language inadequacy, and the child consequently reverts to usage of the dominant language with a person who frequently switches. More recently Saunders (1980) reported similar findings with the

children in his study classifying speakers who switched from German to English as improper speakers of German and thus choosing to converse with such speakers in English.

This intolerance for mixing is sometimes extreme. McLaughlin (1978) noted that children frequently pretend not to understand when speakers use a language other than the one the child is accustomed to hearing from that speaker. Children may even refuse to answer if the parents address them in a language other than the expected one. Grosjean (1982) commented on these same phenomena and reported that such behaviors are reflective of distress the child experiences when his or her differentiation system is upset.

Saunders (1980) suggested that the degree of the child's intolerance may be related to that of the parents. In his study mother did not strongly discourage language mixing by the children since her language held a stronger position. The children, apparently as a consequence, were undisturbed by, and indeed appeared not even to notice, the mother's switches. Father, on the other hand, avoided lexical transfers since his language held a weaker position and the children followed suit. When father did switch unexpectedly, the children became very ill at ease and annoyed that the usual arrangement had been broken. They were, in fact, only comfortable with father speaking English to them in role play. Fantini (1978) similarly reported that English usage between father and child was tolerated only during games when English-speaking roles were assigned.

Another indication that violations of the person-language rule are disturbing to children can be seen in their insistence on quoting others in the appropriate language. Fantini (1978) observed that this phenomenon occurred with stories, jokes, and songs as well as with imitation. Saunders (1980) proposed that a desire to capture and preserve the original accurately motivated quotational switching. Interestingly, he found that such switches were generally preceded by a marker such as "I'll say this in English" to indicate that the customary language arrangement was not really being violated.

Children adhere strongly to the person-language rule in other situations as well. Saunders (1980) reported that when English was used by the children to monolingual English speakers in the presence of father, they would repeat the same information for father in German. Since father fully understood English, this behavior suggests that the children experienced discomfort with regard to violating the rule. It appears that they felt a need to convey their awareness of and compliance with the arrangement to speak only German with father as well as their concern that he not feel excluded.

Inclusion and Exclusion

Issues of inclusion and exclusion related to language selection are clearly of concern to children. Saunders (1980) reported that young children often carry on summary translations until they recognize that their parents are proficient in both

languages. Grosjean (1982) emphasized that the bilingual child automatically translates whenever s/he realizes that a person will be excluded if no interpretation is provided. An exception described by Fantini (1978) is when children wish to indulge in critical or negative commentary without having to assume responsibility for hurting an individual openly. This most typically occurs in response to strangers with whom the children need not interact directly.

Saunders (1980) emphasized several issues with respect to inclusion and exclusion, one of which is family integrity. In instances where one parent does not have a good understanding of the other parent's language, the potential for a negative effect on family relationships certainly exists. Rather than having one parent use the language only when the other parent is absent, summary translation would be recommended. Otherwise, time spent jointly with parents would be limited, disharmony might result, a reduction in the child's contact with the language would be involved, and messages might be conveyed that the language isn't completely acceptable. Translation and brief inclusionary comments or eye contacts are usually modeled by the parent in the presence of non-speakers which may include the other parent. Similarly, translation is promoted even when the second parent does understand the language to maintain the one person-one language formula. Saunders (1980) described the successful

communication patterns developed by one family who were concerned with ensuring family harmony and integrity.

Dominance and Balance

Unless translation is encouraged, children will tend to begin utilizing the language understood by both parents. This is most often the language of the school and the community as well as the language heard on television, radio, and the telephone. Grosjean (1982) suggested that it is extremely difficult for a child to become a true bilingual when one language is dominant even if the second language is a high-status language. He explained that not only does one language develop more strongly, but interference with the weaker language results and differentiation is retarded. McLaughlin (1978) also emphasized that when one language predominates, interference with the subordinate language will be seen. This interference may be in the form of substituting sound features of the dominant language, creating hybrid forms, or avoiding words that are more difficult to pronounce in the subordinate language. Leopold reported in his third volume (1949) that when balance shifted in favor of one language, signs of interference were noted in his daughter's speech.

Linguistic balance is clearly difficult to achieve but can be promoted by monitoring exposure to the two languages. Saunders (1980) reported in his study that to provide a counterbalance to the children's greater contact with English, father initiated German discussions of English television programs with

explanations of plot and dialogue as well as later reenactment of scenes. Such strategies offer an alternative to the more rigid recommendation of Christian (1977) that television either be absent or viewing of majority language shows highly restricted.

Another means by which to address the issue of balance is by reinforcing the minority language by early literacy training. Andersson (1975) reviewed the evidence of several investigators supporting teaching children 18-36 months of age to read. Grosjean (1982) emphasized the relationship between competency in a first language and competency in a second, viewing a solid grounding in reading and writing in the minority language as essential. Lado (1977) pointed out the interdependence factor as well and emphasized that transfer of reading skills from one language to another proceeds with relative ease in most instances since the same alphabet is used. Saunders (1980) reported that reading skills transferred readily between German and English in a child he studied. In this instance the child experienced no difficulty learning to read the two languages simultaneously, supporting findings by Past (1977). The Past (1977) study reported on a child who was exposed at age 2 as she was learning to speak to reading in English and Spanish. At age 5, assessment showed the child to be functioning at a second-grade level in reading of both languages and to have achieved balanced bilingualism orally. Christian (1977) favored successive acquisition since he assumed that written Spanish would be learned

more rapidly than English. He based this assumption on the fact that the Spanish sound system possesses greater clarity and predictability than the English sound system and on the fact that the sound system in Spanish closely corresponds with the writing system in Spanish. The children in his study experienced no difficulty learning to read English when they entered kindergarten at age 5. Thus, both simultaneous and successive acquisition methods of early literacy training have been used with success.

Christian (1977) suggested that the development of literacy in the minority language was not only essential, but that the earlier and more fully developed these abilities were before the majority language was learned, the better the outcome. He stressed that since reading is one component of language use to which prestige is attached, the family should maximize skills in the minority language. This appears particularly important given that the school will emphasize the dominant language both in reading and other academic subjects.

Alternative Educational Programs

Christian is of the belief that the public schools represent a primary threat to the development of full proficiency in a minority language. Many agree and as a result educational alternatives have been sought which might lead to linguistic and cultural diversification. Two such approaches are maintenance programs and immersion programs. Maintenance programs attempt to maintain the minority child's culture as s/he is exposed to the

majority culture and to promote functional bilingualism. In the United States several such programs have been developed in Hispanic and Native American communities. Immersion programs are less common in the United States, having been primarily promoted for the minority children of English Canadian parents in French-speaking regions of Canada. The aim of such programs is to immerse the children in the French culture and expose them to a French-speaking environment first and then gradually permit their own minority language, English, to be used, thus ultimately promoting competence in both languages. Results have shown that the development of the minority language (English) is slowed but not impaired. An important finding, however, is that when the social use of French is limited, immersion programs provide only a foundation for bilingualism and do not succeed in creating functional bilingualism. This finding underscores the need for parents to encourage interaction with speakers of both languages within the home and in the community and to promote exposure to both cultures through all available means.

Generated Guidelines

In conclusion, the literature reviewed suggests that my husband and I adopt the following guidelines in our endeavor to foster bilingualism in our child:

1. Have the child communicate with father in Spanish and with mother in English whether the other parent is present or not to promote differentiation by person.

2. Have father and mother converse with one another in English in the presence of the child with father switching to Spanish when addressing or including the child.

3. Have father model translating into English when mother is present during father-child interaction to include mother and to maintain the person-language rule.

4. Have the child communicate with English speakers in English in the presence of father while encouraging translation into Spanish to include father and to maintain the person-language rule.

5. Have the child communicate with Spanish speakers in Spanish in the presence of mother while encouraging translation into English to include mother and to maintain the person-language rule.

6. Encourage all Spanish speakers at first encounter to address the child in Spanish to establish their identity as Spanish speakers and to promote more interaction in the non-dominant language.

7. Encourage Spanish speakers to avoid language switching with the child since this might cause the child to revert to English in the belief that Spanish is not required to communicate or in the belief that Spanish is not the individual's stronger language.

8. Have father maintain a rigid rule about language switching since father's language is the non-dominant language and switching may create interference between languages.

9. Have mother discourage language switching as well since the degree of a child's language switching can negatively influence parental assessment of success and thus undermine continued efforts to promote dual language acquisition and learning.

10. Have mother and father maintain consistency with respect to language usage according to setting and function to further promote differentiation.

11. Have mother and father demonstrate willingness to provide linguistic assistance in their respective languages to spare the child unnecessary frustration which might lead to language avoidance.

12. Have mother and father participate with the child in cultural events in Spanish and promote exposure to the Hispanic community to engender positive attitudes toward the non-dominant culture and language.

13. Have mother and father emphasize Spanish radio and television programs and de-emphasize English programs to improve language balance.

14. Ensure access to Spanish recordings, story books, and food within the home to encourage vocabulary growth as well as to minimize English dominance.

15. Provide early literacy training in Spanish prior to the *development of reading skills in English which will later* predominate--investigate Doman (1982) techniques.

16. Enroll the child in a Spanish-speaking preschool, encouraging regular interaction with Spanish-speaking playmates, and investigate primary schools.

17. Lastly, have mother, father, and child travel annually to a Spanish-speaking country to enjoy the luxury of letting it all happen naturally!

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